

Existing law provides for a pilot program of continuing education for teacher's aides and other paraprofessionals who work in state-approved elementary and secondary schools to meet teacher certification qualifications. Provides for a tuition exemption for required teacher training courses at state public colleges or universities and certain specified nonpublic institutions. Limits exemption to a certain number of courses per semester or quarter and prohibits tuition exemptions for courses in theology or divinity. Limits amount of tuition paid to registration and building use fees and prohibits tuition amounts paid to any nonpublic institution from exceeding the highest tuition charged for that course by a state public college or university.

New law retains existing law except provides that the Dept. of Education establish the program with BESE approval rather than providing that BESE establish the program by rule. Also removes the restriction that the program be a pilot program and adds the requirement that in addition to the tuition exemption, participants in the program shall receive a stipend at the beginning of the semester or quarter in which the participant performs his student teaching in an amount equal to the amount of the salary which would otherwise have been paid by the employing school system to the participant if such person was not participating in the program as provided in new law.

Prior law provided for reimbursement procedures by the state superintendent of education to the colleges and universities for the program.

New law deletes this provision.

Existing law provides that funds for the program shall come from state appropriations for such purpose and if funds are insufficient to cover all program participants, then tuition exemptions shall be awarded on a priority basis as provided by BESE rules.

New law retains existing law.

Existing law defines "eligible paraprofessional" as a person who is not certified as a classroom teacher but who is assigned to one or more specific teachers or schools on a full-time basis to assist with classroom instruction and with other duties related to the instruction of students. Specifies that to be eligible to participate in the program after July 1, 1989, an applicant shall have been admitted to an approved college of education at a state public college or university or at a nonpublic institution as specified in R.S. 17:7.3(A)(1) and shall have taken the general knowledge and communications parts of the National Teachers Examination and achieved the score required for entry into a teacher education program.

New law retains existing law except removes July 1, 1989, date and adds to existing law eligibility requirements that an applicant shall agree to practice his or her profession in the public elementary or secondary schools of the state for at least two consecutive years after completion of all required courses for certification and upon becoming certified as a teacher. New law changes existing law reference to the National Teachers Examination to the appropriate teacher examination as provided in R.S. 17:7(6) relative to teacher certification.

Prior law required program participants to enter into agreements with the state superintendent of education to reimburse the superintendent for all tuition costs paid on the participant's behalf which were not otherwise reimbursed to the state and for any applicable collection costs if the participant failed to make timely reimbursement.

New law deletes this provision.

Prior law required reimbursement to the state superintendent by a participant for whom payment was advanced for any monies allocated and paid on the participant's behalf which were not otherwise reimbursed and any applicable collection costs if such participant did not become certified within a year after completing all required courses for certification, was found to be ineligible, dropped a course after the deadline for obtaining a refund from the college or university, or failed to complete a course successfully. Provided for collection by the attorney general for obligations which were not timely paid. Provided that any person who received retirement benefits from a state retirement system or who owed reimbursement to the state superintendent under this program would be ineligible for participation.

New law provides instead that any participant who does not become certified within a year after completing all required courses for certification, is found to be ineligible, drops a course after the deadline for obtaining a refund from the college or university, fails to complete a course successfully, or does not practice his or her profession for at least two consecutive years as required in new law, except for reasons of illness or death, shall be responsible for the repayment of any monies allocated or paid on his behalf pursuant to the program. Removes prior law provision relative to collection by the attorney general and relative to ineligibility of persons receiving retirement benefits or owing reimbursement under the program.

Existing law requires the state superintendent to annually report to the House and Senate education committees on the program and provides that such report shall include:

- (1) The number of persons applying for such education.
- (2) The number of persons accepted in the program.
- (3) The educational background and the work experience of such persons.
- (4) The number of participants receiving a teaching certificate.
- (5) The amount of reimbursement paid by the Dept. of Education.
- (6) The funding that would have been necessary to reimburse tuition for qualifying courses for all eligible applicants.

New law retains existing law except requires the Dept. of Education instead of the state superintendent to submit the report and deletes items (5) and (6) from the list of items to be included in the report.

Existing law specifies that rules and regulations adopted by BESE for the program shall be adopted in accordance with the APA. Provides that the total administrative costs of the program shall not exceed an annual cost of \$2,000.

New law retains existing law and adds that the cost of the program as provided in new law shall not exceed \$100,000 for the first year of implementation.

Effective August 15, 1999.

(Amends R.S. 17:7.4)